

Message

From: Cogliano, Gerain [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=4BA589A367194EFD92030BFBE891A298-COGLIANO, GERAIN]
Sent: 2/5/2014 8:18:42 PM
To: Cogliano, Vincent [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=51f2736376ac4d32bad2fe7cfef2886b-Cogliano, Vincent]
Subject: FW: epa nominees

From: Cogliano, Gerain
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2014 3:18 PM
To: Hostage, Barbara
Subject: epa nominees



Senate Panel Plans Votes On EPA Nominees

Posted: February 4, 2014

The Senate environment committee is slated to vote Feb. 6 on three EPA nominees, including Ken Kopocis, the administration's nominee to head the agency's water office who has been awaiting confirmation since 2011 due to GOP opposition to President Obama's environmental agenda.

Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD), a member of the committee, told *Inside EPA* Feb. 4 that the committee vote is a welcome relief because it is the first step in overcoming the long-time Republican opposition and will fill out the administration's team at EPA. "President Obama needs his team in place and delays are caused not by the qualifications of people but outside factors," he said.

According to the *Congressional Record*, the committee is slated to hold a Feb. 6 business meeting to vote on several pending bills and nominations, including those of Kopocis and Victoria Baecher Wassmer, who has been nominated to serve as the agency's chief financial officer, and Thomas Burke to lead the agency's research office.

The scheduled votes are the first on EPA nominees since Senate Democrats last year eliminated Republicans' ability to filibuster over executive branch nominees and most judicial nominees, an action that appears likely to allow Democrats to overcome long-time GOP opposition to many nominees and a tool they had used to block the Obama administration's environmental agenda.

Kopocis, for example, has been delayed for over 900 days because of GOP concerns over several EPA policies, including the agency's pending efforts to clarify the reach of the Clean Water Act.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) even cited Kopocis' case to justify Democrats' elimination of the filibuster. Kopocis "has been waiting [since 2011] because [Republicans] don't like [EPA]," he said last fall.

But Republicans have raised concerns that elimination of the filibuster will limit the minority's ability to conduct oversight of administration policies and vowed to examine the impact of the filibuster's elimination.

Following the Senate's rule change, Republicans have deployed alternative methods to push back against the majority's efforts to speed confirmations, including forcing Democrats to hold a hearing on nominees who were originally considered "privileged," meaning they did not need a committee hearing. For example, Sen. David Vitter (R-LA), the ranking Republican on the environment committee, last year eliminated the privilege on Wassmer's nomination, forcing Democrats to hold a hearing last December.

At that time, Democrats feared they would have to hold additional hearings on the nominees in the new session of Congress but they appear to have gotten around that hurdle as the committee is voting on the nominations without an additional hearing.

If the committee approves the nominees, they will eventually be considered by the full Senate.

Gerain Cogliano

OSWER's Regulatory Steering Committee Representative

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